

The Monroe Doctrine

ITS BRITISH ORIGIN
AND AMERICAN
DEVELOPMENT

By

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THE MONROE DOCTRINE

ITS BRITISH ORIGIN AND AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT

George Canning, born 11th April, 1770, was contemporary with Fox, the younger Pitt, Castlereagh, Sheridan, Huskisson, Erskine and Burke, and it required a strong light to shine distinctly in such a galaxy. He first took a seat in the British House of Commons in 1793, in the twenty-third year of his age. Canning's name is said to have been derived from the original fair-haired Bishop Canninges in Wales.

His father was a literary man, with a gift of communication; his mother was a lady of talents who for a time followed the stage as her profession, so the future prime minister came honestly by his varied mental powers.

He was educated at Eton and Oxford, and of scholarly attainments. He used his poetic skill sometimes in satire, but generally for amusement.

While Mr. Falck represented the Dutch Government, Sir Charles Bagot, British Ambassador at the Hague, was, in 1826, urging that Holland adopt a more reasonable spirit in her tariff, when he received from Mr. Canning, then Prime Minister, a despatch in cipher. It was short and seemed urgent, but to his amazement he found it was rendered thus:

"In matters of commerce, the fault of the Dutch
Is giving too little and asking too much;
With equal advantage the French are content,
So we'll clap on Dutch bottoms a twenty per cent,
Twenty per cent,
Twenty per cent,
'Nous frapperons Falck with twenty per cent.'"

Canning became Minister for Foreign Affairs in 1801. His system of foreign policy resolved itself into this principle of action, that "England should hold the balance, not only between contending nations, but between conflicting principles; that, in order to prevent things from going to extremities, she should keep a distinct middle ground, staying the plague both ways." The measure adopted by Canning, providing generally for non-interference and fair play, was opposed by Lord Castlereagh and Lord Eldon, but Mexico, Colombia, Buenos Ayres and other Spanish-American colonies, were sustained by Canning's bold front. "In the result," as Sir F. Pollock says, "England recognized the Spanish-American States in the modest but effective way of making commercial treaties with them. Spain grumbled, the Holy Alliance protested, but Canning paid no attention to either."

He said in the House of Commons, "I called the New World into existence to redress the balance of the old."

When the Union between England and Ireland was brought about, and Pitt could not induce King George to agree to Catholic emancipation, which he argued should follow the Union, he resigned office, and Canning went out with him, in 1801. His most famous lyric was now written, called "The Pilot that weathered the storm," the pilot being Pitt.

Canning contended for the repeal of the corn laws and did much in unravelling the tangle of British foreign relations. When he died, on the 8th of August, 1827, he was laid beside Pitt in Westminster Abbey, and Britain mourned for a talented and

brave son, who had ever been true to her interests, as he understood them.

The Holy Alliance was a combination of European powers to control the political destinies of a great part of the world. The crusade, begun in the name of the liberties of Europe, ended with the Holy Alliance—the masses were not consulted. Canning struck it a blow at the Congress of Verona. France had a large idle army and proposed to employ it in invading Spain. Russia approved—but England "spoke out in this cabal of despots." Canning instructed her representative, the Duke of Wellington, that, come what might, he should refuse the King's assent to become a party to a declaration of war without a cause. He refused to aid in forcing on Spain such a constitution as its Bourbon King, in exercise of his absolute authority, chose to give them. Free institutions could, he said, only flow, whether in Spain or England, from the people. So England declined to join in the Spanish invasion. Canning protested against holding Congresses for the government of the world.

We will now refer to the British origin of what is known as The Monroe Doctrine. On the 20th of August, 1823, Canning wrote a confidential note to Mr. Richard Rush, then United States Minister at London. He urged that their government should come to an understanding as to the Spanish-American colonies, and suggested that it would be "expedient for ourselves and beneficial for all the world that the principles of it should be clearly settled and plainly avowed." The question of the recognition of these colonies as independent states, he conceived to be one of time and circumstances. "We aim not at any portion of them ourselves." "We could not see any portion of them transferred to any other power with indifference." "If there be any European power which cherishes other projects . . . such a declaration on the part of your government and ours would be at once the most effectual and least offensive mode of intimating our joint disapprobation of such projects." While Mr. Rush was anxious that Britain

should acknowledge the independence of these colonies, he feared to commit his country to the support of any scheme or principle with England, or to join in any alliance. He could not see the difficulties in Canning's way in connection with English interests and entanglement in European politics. The larger mind of Thomas Jefferson, when consulted by President Monroe, was expressed in an important opinion or letter of advice, from which the following is taken. "Our first and fundamental maxim," Jefferson wrote, "should be, never to entangle ourselves in the broils of Europe; our second, never to suffer Europe to intermeddle with cis-Atlantic affairs."

"Great Britain is the nation which can do us the most harm of anyone or all on earth, and, with her on our side, we need not fear the whole world. With her then we should sedulously cherish a cordial friendship, and nothing would tend more to knit our affections than to be fighting once more side by side in the same cause." Canning, on the 9th of October, 1823, made known his sentiments to the Prince de Polignac, the French ambassador, stating that "the junction of any foreign power in an enterprise of Spain against the colonies would be viewed as constituting an entirely new question, and one upon which they must take such decision as the interests of Great Britain might require."

It will be noted that the great American statesman and constitution-framer seems to have taken his inspiration from the British Minister's communication then before him.

It was on the second day of December, 1823, after being so advised, that, in his message to Congress, Mr. Monroe promulgated the famous doctrine, to which his name is historically attached, but which was, in fact, but his adoption of and adherence to that policy more than three months before, declared, so far as its general principles extend, by Mr. Canning, in his letter to the American Minister.

The initiation of the idea, and its enunciation, are however claimed by Mr. W. L. Scruggs in the N. Am. Re-

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view of February, 1903, as cis-Atlantic.

He admits that Monroe did not first proclaim it, but finds a forecast of the doctrine in the immortal Washington's Farewell Address of September, 1796, in which he certainly advised his nation to hold aloof from foreign complications. In a late American book entitled, "The Conqueror," it is shown that General Alexander Hamilton, leader of the old Federal party, was Washington's confidant at this time, and the author or inspirer of the sentiments as to the foreign policy of the United States expressed in the farewell address. Mr. Scruggs, also, refers to a note from Mr. J. Q. Adams, American Secretary of State, to Mr. Rush, of 2nd of July, 1823, in which he referred to the Latin American republics and declared, and instructed his ambassador to declare, that the American continents were "no longer to be subject to colonization." It meant that there were no American vacant lands over which European nations might contend for possession.

It is, therefore, argued that Canning knew of the United States position when he wrote to Dr. Rush.

Assuming this to be so, it appears that the doctrine was academic, without political significance, until the Duke of Wellington, by Canning's orders, practically enunciated it at the Congress of Verona in 1822, and Canning rightly claimed that he called the new South American world into political existence. Satisfied with such practical action, he cared no more for a mere doctrine, and seems to have henceforth almost dismissed the matter from his thoughts.

The several parts, taken in the American discussion by the statesmen, James Madison, Thomas Jefferson, John Q. Adams and J. C. Calhoun, are set forth in a brochure by Mr. W. Ford, published in 1902.

There is no doubt that Adams enunciated the fact that America was no longer open to European colonization. Jefferson wrote the President with his opinion as to the matter and the mode of announcing the doctrine, on 24th October, 1823, and Madison six days after. Mr. Calhoun was un-

usually hesitating as to the course to pursue.

Adams was a "masterful man, certain of his ground." "It was certainly Adams, not Monroe, who spoke in the paragraphs of the President's message on this doctrine."

Referring to the South American colonies, Mr. Monroe said in the message, "With the governments who have declared their independence, and maintained it, and whose independence we have, on great consideration, and on just principle, acknowledged, we could not view any interposition for the purpose of oppressing them, or controlling in any other manner their destiny, by any European power, in any other light than as a manifestation of an unfriendly disposition toward the United States."

The doctrine was thus formulated to the world, not as an international or even domestic law, except in so far as the right of self-preservation is part of the natural law of nations, as well as individuals. It was recognized as a principle for guidance in which two great nations agreed, and which it behoved other nations to regard, or, as Sir Frederick Pollock writes, in the Nineteenth Century for October, 1902, "Not that Monroe's dictum could have of itself any binding force on his successors. Its present importance is derived, on the contrary, from their continuous and deliberate approval." "We have not formally re-asserted Canning's policy in its modern application. . . . but we have done better. We have acted upon that policy and those principles."

Mr. Monroe lived before his country had its hold on Cuba, the Hawaiian Islands or the Philippines, nor had it then its great front on the Pacific coast. It is even now connecting two oceans, through the Isthmus of Panama. With such outlying limbs or dependencies, the danger of friction with other powers is vastly increased.

We heard much of the doctrine when the Spanish-American war was in progress, and when trouble arose between Great Britain and Venezuela, first, as to disputed boundary, and, later, as to repudiation of monetary

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obligations by that enterprising people. It was admitted, however, that the doctrine was not intended to shield the wrong-doer or prevent the assertion of equitable rights between nations. The European claims against Venezuela are to be adjudged and settled by the Hague tribunal, and, if then settled, well; but, if not, then is the mortgage to be foreclosed and occupation or partition follow as the result?

President Roosevelt has more than once given his views on the position. In his first presidential message, he wrote: "Our people intend to abide by the Monroe doctrine and to insist on it as the one sure means of securing the peace of the Western Hemisphere." He also said: "The doctrine will be respected as long as we have a first-class navy—not very much longer." "Our attitude towards all powers must be one of such dignified courtesy and respect, as we intend they shall shew us." "In return, they must be willing to give us the friendly regard we exact from them." The London Times, commenting on the doctrine as so stated, remarked, Aug. 28th, 1902: "As it is defined by President Roosevelt—in strict conformity, indeed with its original conception and objects—it is a policy to which this country has no right to take exception, and which we have no interest in obstructing." Mr. Austen Chamberlain, British Postmaster-General, lately expressed similar approval.

In old slavery days a "Higher law" was invoked. As the Rocky Mountains soared above the Alleghanies, and they above the Blue Mountains, so the higher law, or pet principle of the abolitionists, rose over every human enactment. The Monroe Doctrine is now the favorite with Young America. Captain R. P. Hobson, late of the United States navy, known for his feat in Cuban waters, in a late article in the North American Review, entitled, "America Mistress of the Sea," finds elements of power, numbers and vigor of population, and material resources, without a parallel in history, together with conditions never yet equalled, etc. He urges the increase of the navy, and

says, "We have not receded one step from the Monroe Doctrine of our forefathers, yet South America is as far from us as it is from Europe. When the race for South American markets becomes close, and when the growing European immigration to South America becomes stronger and more controlling, we can maintain the Monroe Doctrine there, and be guaranteed against any assault upon it, only by being able to send to South America as large a fleet as Europe could send." And this brave and loyal tar, who would make a very practical and profitable use of the Doctrine, urges that the practical way to hasten the reign of peace is "to place control in the hands of the nation of peace, the nation of liberty, the nation of beneficent promptings; let them realize that the United States navy, which alone can give control to the nation, is thus the bulwark of human liberty, the agent of peace, the instrument of brotherly love."

Captain Mahan, the U. S. expert naval officer of greater age and experience than Hobson, in the International Review for February, 1903, claims that the Doctrine has the power of development inherent in dogma and varies in its application as the emergency arises; it is a policy, not a law; but it is not a mere idea; it is a will and can be applied, as the national will, when it becomes a power. Power, he says, has two factors, force and position.

In the captain's views, international responsibility is limited to the coercion of Venezuela, and the like American countries, which have incurred indebtedness abroad, to any extent short of conquest and annexation or protectorate. He says, however, "it is evident that for a nation to owe money to a foreign government directly, or by guarantee, is a very different political condition to that of indebtedness contracted in open market for individuals." "It is the part of wisdom, and substantially of justice, to exclude such occasions of offence." This expression has aroused attention in Europe. It has been the custom of promoters of schemes for the improvement of new

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nations, from the introduction of bibles to locomotives, to look to the home government to sustain their demands when obstacles are met, or payment is refused. The legitimate result of the above proposition may ultimately be that safety in such schemes, and security in results, may be best secured by first obtaining the endorsement of the big American brother. What an opening this will be for the enterprising middle-man with a government pull!

Captain Mahan describes the American policy as "Hemispheric"; and kindly leaves to European influence Africa, with the Levant and India, and the countries between them, but excludes from such influence or paramountcy Japan, China and the Pacific with its islands.

The London Morning Post says, "We are compelled to think that the Monroe Doctrine so applied to the South American States has a tendency to restrict European enterprise, and that it can only be justified by a very great development of American enterprise in that part of the world."

When the late proposed sale of the Danish West India Islands to the United States fell through, for reasons scarcely complimentary to the negotiators, it appeared that there was a substitute treaty providing that Denmark should cede to the United States St. Thomas or St. John, both of which islands have excellent harbors, and should agree not to sell the other islands to any power other than the United States, who should in return give tariff concessions. Thus, without any expenditure of money, our astute neighbors would by treaty encompass these islands with the Monroe Doctrine. Danish sentiment seems largely favorable to such alliance with the big family of States, for, as one of their nation lately said, "We see the nations are trying to get into society."

The young and sanguine Hobson, and many other Americans with aquiline wings, find the Doctrine a sybilline oracle, ever ready to advise extension and the grasping of power, that good may be done or glory may be maintained for their native land. It crops up in every argument as to

present duty and every vision of the future. Under this aegis, the far-away Philippines were to be saved, and yet, after many months of bloody experimenting there, at a cost of \$60,000,000 a year, President Schurman, the Commissioner, closed his message with, "And to repeat what ought not to need repetition anywhere within the limits of our Republic, any decent kind of government of Filipinos by Filipinos is better than the best possible government of Filipinos by Americans." Mr. Andrew Carnegie, who has lately turned political Solon, seems, from his writings, to be of the same opinion. The Doctrine may mean anything from Imperialism to moral suasion, and yet it is to be regretted that it does not work automatically, but must be twisted and turned to fit each case.

In America especially, the Doctrine veers about, regardless of all rules of logic or precedent, as the ship of State sails landward, well supplied with guns and powder, but is expressed very differently, and, with a fine show of altruism, as the vessel gets foul and seeks aid, or, may be, fears attack or overhauling from the craft of other nations, who have been accustomed to a free sea and a free hand upon it.

It varies with the position and mood of the speaker, whose mellow, after-dinner ebullitions often effervesce far above the sober sentiments of the morning.

Though the Doctrine first came into political significance in old London, it has become acclimatized and grows apace among our Republican neighbors, while many young Canadians find in Imperialism a favorite for their hopes and fancies.

He who reads or listens, however wearied with the repetition, may rest at ease, knowing how plastic these doctrines are, and how very attractive to the aspiring.

It is to be hoped that such principles of action will prevail on this hemisphere as will preserve it free from the schemes of any alliance, holy or unholy. Such charity should begin with amendment at home and be content in offering example, without attempting to coerce abroad. The

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unfortunate Maximilian, who lost his life in Mexico in July, 1867, will be the last representative of European imperialism and re-action in America.

We remember that some score of more or less lusty young Republics have sprung up on the fertile soil of South America within little more than a century, that their white people are mostly of Latin origin, and have often little sympathy with the Anglo-Saxon and his form of civilization, while the mass of the population is an Indian and negroid mixture. We are, therefore, not sorry to find that at this period of their development, a strong nation, more akin to our own in origin and feelings, is in position, not only to protect, but to insist, through a species of overlordship, on fair play to others. The right being claimed, such duty seems reciprocal.

It has been suggested that Monroe-

ism, or Canningism, may even interfere with the settlement of the dispute between Great Britain and France as to Newfoundland and the adjacent islands, but, when we get that far from Washington, Canada, with her large territory and interests, seems entitled to "overlord" to some extent, and must be considered. The doctrine will, no doubt, be found sufficiently pliable to permit the rounding off the Eastern end of the Dominion without dispute. It may, also be expected that the South American Republics will, before many decades elapse, become weary of internal feuds, and following Anglo-Saxon examples, form a confederacy, which may refuse with vigor any such suzerainty, however limited, in regard to foreign relations, as is now proposed.

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Toronto.

